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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0754
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 2030
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 9066
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 7304
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5213
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3459
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 5165
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0038
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 0700
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 4276
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 9629
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 6923
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0012
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 3823
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001032

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INSB

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [EAID](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: MISSION ANNOUNCES RE-DIRECTION OF ASSISTANCE AWAY
FROM CLOSED IDP CAMPS

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Classified By: AMBASSADOR PATRICIA A. BUTENIS. REASONS: 1.4 (B, D)

¶1. (C) On November 11, Ambassador met with Basil Rajapaksa, senior advisor to the president and chief of the Sri Lankan Government's relief and reconstruction efforts, to announce the U.S. decision to redirect aid from closed camps to returnees, host families, and open camps by March 2010. Rajapaksa seemed unsurprised by the information. (NOTE: Other donor partners have already approached him and other GSL officials to inform them of the re-direction of their countries' assistance. END NOTE.) Rajapaksa raised two points of concern. First, he was worried about an end of aid to ex-combatants, who he said would certainly remain in closed camps for the near future. Ambassador assured him that the U.S. would continue to support their rehabilitation but reminded him that their legal status still had not been determined.

¶2. (C) Rajapaksa's second concern was that there would still likely be some IDPs remaining in camps by March. He said some of them did not wish to leave as they had no homes to return to and cited UN guidance that IDPs should not be pushed out, must be allowed to leave with dignity and safety, and that humanitarian aid should not be used to force people to leave the camps. Ambassador affirmed that the U.S. would work with the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) as the time for this redirection of aid approached to examine whether the remaining camps would still be considered closed. She assured him that the U.S. did not intend to surprise them with the redirection of aid.

¶3. (C) After this conversation with Rajapaksa, Ambassador notified Neil Buhne, Resident Coordinator of the UN Mission in Sri Lanka, of the U.S. decision. She also discussed the issue with a group of third-country partners, who noted their countries' own decisions to re-direct assistance. Ambassador was unable to get an appointment with Foreign Minister

Bogollagama to inform him of the new policy but will look for an opportunity to discuss it with him and other GSL officials in the near future. Visiting PRM PDAS Sam Whitten also will be raising the issue in his many meetings with GSL officials and INGOs over the next several days.

COMMENT

14. (C) We have announced the U.S. re-direction of assistance to top Sri Lankan government officials, to the UN, and to European and other third-country partners. Embassy is planning many more such conversations over the next few weeks with GSL officials, Sri Lankan NGOs and INGOs, and others concerned about the IDP issue. Embassy has not/not issued a proactive press statement on redirection of assistance and would appreciate Department concurrence with this approach.

15. (C) Embassy strongly believes that making a public announcement on re-direction would be counter-productive to attaining our goal. This was brought home to us by the Norwegian ambassador who told us the new policy on redirection -- which the Europeans are also pursuing -- was particularly effective because it was not done publicly or in an obviously coordinated fashion. By individual countries quietly making approaches at high levels, the Rajapaksa ruling group was impressed with the seriousness of purpose. Moreover, they appreciated the willingness of the various countries involved not to try to use the new policy for political ends or to create an electoral issue out of food aid. Given our many previous and planned conversations on assistance re-direction with GSL officials and others, as well as similar conversations by European partners, we are

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confident that our message is being clearly received and that our approach has the greatest chance of success.
BUTENIS